

One large gallery

BY LUCILLE DAVIE

Johannesburg's inner city is about to become one large art gallery, its buildings posted with giant murals chosen from entries to the "JHB Art City" competition.

The competition aims to "showcase the inner city as the hub and cultural centre of Africa's world-class city" by tying up with regeneration projects around the city and displaying art works on the sides of a range of buildings.

Greatly enlarged versions of art works will be exhibited from August on various sites, including on the Nelson Mandela Bridge, in Mary Fitzgerald and Gandhi squares, the new Metro Market, the Civic Theatre and Constitution Hill.

About 30 works will go up on the 12 sites, 15 chosen from entries submitted to the competition, and 15 from corporate collections.

South African artists who have had at least one solo or group show in the past three years, were invited to submit a maximum of two works on standard-sized canvasses. Recent and new works completed between January last year and May this year, were accepted.

The judging panel consists of Bongi Dhlomo, Natasha Fuller, Clive Kellner and Monna Mokoena. Works submitted from corporate collections will afford a rare glimpse of South African art works seldom seen by the general public.

All the chosen works will be scanned and then enlarged without distortion, to be displayed as massive murals on the sides of buildings or in billboard-style mountings. Originals of the chosen art works will be displayed at venues around the city.

The murals will remain displayed until the Cricket World Cup in March 2003, but the works will be changed annually.

In addition to making visual art easily accessible to the city's people and visitors complementary arts events in the public spaces at selected project locations will be performed.

Downtown attractions

The area's revival will come under the spotlight at the Jo'burg Best Practices Exhibition, one of the WSSD satellite events and conferences.

The exhibition, "Local action moves the world ... from agenda to action", will provide concrete demonstrations of best practices in local governments and councils in South Africa and the rest of the world. It will be an important adjunct to the conference on local government and will run from 24 August to 4 September and be housed at the Electric Workshop, an old electrical power station and now a historical landmark in the Newtown Cultural Precinct.

Apart from exhibits by local and international participants there will also be a media centre, Internet café, travel desk and shebeen.

Mandy Jean Woods, Director of Communications, Marketing and Tourism for the City of Johannesburg, comments: "Moving beyond the static displays at the exhibition, we aim to re-affirm Johannesburg's stature as a world-class city in Africa, as well as a magnificent show-piece of urban revival.

"A free shuttle service is available to transport Johannesburg World Summit delegates to Newtown. From here a free ride in an open air bus will be offered to Johannesburg's main tourist attractions.

"From Newtown in the east, they can stop and shop at the Oriental Plaza, then move westwards through the city to Joubert Park to see the GreenHouse Project – a showcase among the city's sustainable development projects – and South Africa's finest art gallery.

"On the way back, they will pass the Carlton Centre, leading fashion, gold and diamond centres, as well as the corporate heartland of South Africa's mining industry."

The annual Arts Alive festival has also been timed to coincide with the Summit,

and will take place in Newtown area. Conference delegates will be encouraged to end off their days by visiting the exhibition between 6 and 8pm when the Arts Alive events will begin.

Woods adds that that the exhibition is as much for delegates as for the people of Johannesburg. "Around 800 000 people come into Johannesburg to work each day. This exhibition presents a perfect opportunity for residents, schools and even visitors from neighbouring cities and towns to rediscover the manifold charms of this city. We also want Jo'burgers to see what is important about sustainable development."

The exhibition will also promote the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and other local government organisations. It will attract not only local and provincial government stakeholders, but also companies and individuals who operate in sustainable development environments.

